Gleanings from the Apocrypha

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Gleanings from the Apocrypha

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The Chapter House Doorway, Wells Cathedral

(Photograph, copyright by Walter Scott, Bradford.)

If thou seest a man of understanding,
Get thee betimes unto him,
And let thy foot wear the steps of his door.
(*Ecclesiasticus* 6: 36).

We have been careful, that they that will read may have delight, and that they that are desirous to commit to memory might have ease, and that all into whose hands it comes might have profit.

But to use brevity, and avoid much labouring of the work, is to be granted to him that will make an abridgement.

Here then will we begin the story: only adding thus much to that which hath been said, that it is a foolish thing to make a long prologue, and to be short in the story itself.

(2 *Maccabees*, 2: 25, 32).

The Lord knoweth all that may be known,
And He beholdeth the signs of the world.
He declareth the things that are past, and for to come,
And revealeth the steps of hidden things.
Ecclesiasticus 42: 18, 19.)

Many Bible students ask, what happened during the four centuries between the close of the Old Testament and the opening of the New? Where can we read of the happenings during those years? Some refer enquirers to Herodotus, the Greek historian; but whilst we may readily acknowledge the utility of secular historians, we should not overlook the value of the Apocrypha which helps us, in no small measure, to bridge the gap.

Apocrypha is a Greek word meaning 'hidden,' 'secret.' It occurs, for example, in *Colossians* 2: 3: 'In whom are hid [*apokruphos*] all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' Mark the sense in which the word is used. Unfortunately it has passed through different stages of meaning, and in process of time came to have a bad sense differing little from spurious. The Books of the Apocrypha, except 2nd Esdras, although not included in the Palestinian Canon, i.e. the Hebrew Bible, are included in the Alexandrian, i.e. the Greek translation known as the Septuagint. In the Septuagint the Apocryphal Books, standing without any mark of distinction, were employed by some of the Greek fathers in the same way as the other Books, and are referred to by Origen, Clement and others as 'Scripture,' 'Divine Scripture' and 'Inspired.'

The Book of Common Prayer (Articles of Religion VI) tells us: 'The other Books (i.e. the

Apocrypha) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.' The Books there referred to as 'The Third Book of Esdras' and 'The Fourth Book of Esdras' are now more commonly known as 1 Esdras and 2 Esdras.

The Apocryphal Books were first separated from the canonical in the earliest Protestant edition of the German Bible (1530). 'When the Reformation came, however, Luther reverted to the Hebrew Canon and placed these Books apart under the title of Apocrypha. At the same time he segregated Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation at the end of the New Testament as 'Books of lesser value' (p. 219, *Our Bible and Ancient MSS.*, Kenyon). Coverdale's English Bible (1535) includes the fourteen Books of the Apocrypha in the same order as they appear today. Coverdale entitled them 'The Volume of the Book called Hagiographa' (Writings). Shortly afterwards when the Great Bible appeared the Lutheran title 'Apocrypha' was used.

Up to the time of the Reformation the Bible in common use was Jerome's Latin translation known as the Vulgate. This version, being translated from the Septuagint, naturally included the Apocrypha. Tyndale, however, had paved the way for Coverdale's complete Bible translated direct from the Hebrew and the Greek. As we have said, these MSS. do not include the Apocrypha. Certain passages of the Vulgate—the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church—seemed to afford support to the doctrines of that Church; and it was said the doctrine 'salvation is of works' was supported by certain passages in Ecclesiasticus. The Latin Vulgate was regarded with suspicion by the sup-

porters of the Reformation, and hence, coupled with the fact that the Books are not found in the Hebrew, suspicion fell on the Apocrypha. Nevertheless, it continued to be included in English Bibles, until, following some bitter controversies, in 1827 the Authorised Version began to be printed with the Apocrypha excluded in most though not all issues, and thus it continues today.

The point to be observed here is this: for the greater part of the Christian era the Apocrypha formed a part of the Christian Bible, and, therefore, has played no small part in the development of Christian thought and character.

The attitude of the various branches of the Christian Church towards these Books may be stated thus: (1) The Roman Catholic Church says these Books are "Inspired and Canonical"; (2) Anglican and Lutheran Churches say these Books are 'Inspired but not Canonical'; (3) the Reformed or Protestant Free Churches say these Books are 'neither Inspired nor Canonical.' References from the Apocryphal Books are included in the 'Calendar with the Table of Lessons' (*Book of Common Prayer*), and, therefore, the Apocrypha is included in the Lectern Bibles of the Church of England, and also in what is called the King's Bible on which the Coronation oath is taken. In his book *Our Bible in the Making*, Dr. J. Paterson Smyth tells us that at the Coronation of King Edward VII the Bible Society sent a magnificently bound Bible as a Coronation gift, which had to be returned as it was without the Apocrypha. Whatever attitude we may take as to the authenticity of these Books, it will be seen that not all authorities condemn them, and Bible students will find therein further fields of

exploration. For example, the Second Book of Esdras, chapter 13, includes, among many prophecies relating to the Latter Days, a reference to the Ten Tribes 'which were led away out of their own land at the time of Osea the King.' The Book of Tobit, of the tribe of Naphtali, gives an insight into life among the Ten Tribes in captivity. The First Book of Maccabees, chapter 12, identifies the Spartans (Lacedemonians) with Israel.

The Apocrypha has had the last word of many a critic who, during his lifetime, has argued against its authenticity. We pray we may be forgiven if we suggest that there is a delicate touch of humour in the fact that when many a critic has been laid to rest his mourners have been comforted by the gracious words which open the third chapter of the Wisdom of Solomon.

THE BOOKS OF ESDRAS

'Great is Truth, and mighty above all things'
(1 *Esdras* 4: 41)

The First Book of Esdras. The name Esdras is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Ezra. Little need be said regarding this Book, since, with the exception of the story of three young guardsmen at the court of Darius (Chapters 3 and 4), it follows the canonical books of 2 *Chronicles*, *Ezra and Nehemiah*. Apparently Josephus (Book xi, v, 1) used this Book as his authority for this period of history. If this is so, it must have been an established authority in his day.

The Second Book of Esdras. The general opinion seems to be 'that the book is not all by one hand.

The oldest part—chapters 3 to 14—seems to have been written by a non-Christian Jew of Alexandria about A.D. 81-96; chapters 1, 2, 15 and 16 are by a Christian Jew there about 263.' But the Book itself is dated thus: 'In the thirtieth year after the ruin of the city (i.e. sixth century, B.C.) I was in Babylon, and lay troubled upon my bed . . . for I saw the desolation of Sion . . .' (3: 1, 2). Ewald (1803-1875) claims a Hebrew origin for this Book, and both Wellhausen and Charles point out that a Hebrew origin must be assumed on various grounds; but we are dependent upon Latin manuscripts for our present translation, although some fragments of the Greek texts are still available. From the earliest centuries of the Christian era the Book enjoyed widespread popularity, and apart from the Latin translation there are ancient versions in Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic and Armenian. This widespread dissemination in itself testifies to the popularity of the work, and it is interesting to note that Clement and Ambrose refer to Second Esdras as 'Prophetic Scripture.'

Originally this Book was known as 'The Apocalypse of Ezra.' The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th Ed., vol. 2, p. 176) tells us: 'It is, indeed, below the Apocalypse of Daniel; but its merit is considerable. In modern times Messrs. Frere and Irving gave it a place beside Daniel and St. John—strangely combining the prophecies of the three into one, as though all were formed upon the same plan, and referred to the same events.' Generally speaking, however, the *Second Book of Esdras* has been treated harshly; more so than either *Daniel* or the *Revelation*. As previously stated, the primary meaning of the word Apocrypha is 'hidden,' 'kept

secret.' No book, either apocryphal or canonical, has been hidden or kept secret more thoroughly than the one under notice. There may, however, be a reason for this. Esdras was given certain information not expounded to 'his brother, Daniel' (12: 11, 12). We remember that Daniel was commanded to 'shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end' (*Daniel* 12: 4). As we shall see, the messages of the *Second Book of Esdras* are for this same time. In the interim we note that Esdras is commanded to 'Write all these things that thou hast seen in a book, and hide them: and teach them to the wise of the people, whose hearts thou knowest may comprehend and keep these secrets (12: 37, 38).

The attention of the Bible student is naturally drawn to the Book, since there is reference to: 'the ten tribes which were carried away prisoners out of their own land in the time of Osea the King . . .' (2 *Esdras* 13: 40; compare 2 *Kings* 17: 6).

Before proceeding further with our enquiry, we should like to stress the importance of the distinction between Israel and Judah. Much of the Bible, particularly prophecy, is unintelligible without this knowledge. The following condensed historical outline may help in understanding the writings of Esdras. 2 *Samuel* 2 records David's dramatic progress to the throne, first of Judah and later of both Judah and Israel (2 *Samuel* 5). Thus David was able to hand to his son Solomon a unified nation comprising the Twelve Tribes of Israel. In the closing years of his reign 'Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father' (1 *Kings* 11: 6). Because of his disobedience the Lord declared he would

divide the kingdom (1 *Kings* 11: 11-13). The fulfilment of this is recorded in chapter 12. Through the harshness of Rehoboam, who succeeded to the throne on the death of Solomon his father, ten of the tribes rose up against him and Rehoboam had to flee to Jerusalem, where he reigned over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin only. By this time Jeroboam, Solomon's servant, who had fled to Egypt to seek refuge from Solomon, returned to Palestine and was made king over the Ten Tribes. Rehoboam then assembled the men of Judah and Benjamin to fight against the Ten Tribes and to force them to come under his rule, but he was forbidden to do this by God (v. 24). Thus came about the division of the kingdom into two-tribed Judah and ten-tribed Israel.

After the division (B.C. 975) Israel and Judah were separate nations. Judah occupied the southern part of Palestine, with Jerusalem as the capital; hence she is sometimes referred to as the Southern Kingdom. Israel occupied the north with her capital at Samaria; hence, the Northern Kingdom. None of her kings was of the Davidic line. This division early brought about a difficulty with regard to worship in the Northern Kingdom (1 *Kings* 12: 27). Jeroboam, thinking he might lose his hold over the people if they continued to worship at Jerusalem, made two golden calves (28). In later years further revolt followed when the Laws of the Lord were displaced by the Statutes of Omri, their king (1 *Kings*, 16: 25: *Micah* 6: 16). After approximately two and a half centuries, these acts of rebellion finally led to Israel's national ruin. The pleadings and warnings of the Prophets were unheeded. Israel refused to repent, her high calling was

rejected. The religious and social laws of the Lord were cast aside, thus bringing into effect the penal clauses of the Law (*Leviticus* 26). Then followed four invasions of Israel by the Assyrians, in three of which sections of the population were deported (2 *Kings* 15: 19-20 and 29; 1 *Chronicles* 5: 26; 2 *Kings* 17: 6. Thus ends the history of Israel in Palestine. 'There was none left but the Tribe of Judah only' (2 *Kings* 17: 18).

Judah continued under her own king, of the Davidic line, for many years after the captivity of the Ten Tribes. However, in spite of all warnings Judah followed in the steps of Israel's national decline, and in three successive invasions the kingdom was overthrown. The Assyrian Empire was now succeeded by Babylon, to which country the captives of Judah were deported. (2 *Kings* 24 and 25). Esdras, the author of the Book was a citizen of the southern kingdom of Judah now captive in Babylon.

An examination of the Book shows a series of revelations and visions in which Esdras is instructed in some of the great mysteries of the moral world, and is assured of the final triumph of the righteous.

The first of these revelations is given in chapter4. The second (5: 31), amplifies the first, showing the gradual progress of the divine plan, and of the awful climax wrought by sinful man ere 'my salvation and the end of your world' (6: 25). The third revelation (7) describes the coming of the Messiah and the last scenes of judgment. 'For many great miseries shall be done to them that in the latter time shall dwell in the world, because they have walked in great pride' (8: 50).

Then follows three visions. The first (9: 38) is

of a woman, Sion, in deep sorrow lamenting the death on his bridal day of her only son, the city which Solomon built. The second vision (11) is of an eagle which 'spread her wings over all the earth.' As Esdras looked, the eagle suffered strange transformations until, rebuked by 'as it were a roaring lion,' it is consumed. The last vision (13) is of a man, the Messiah, 'with the thousands of heaven,' against whom the nations of the earth are gathered, till He destroys them and gathers together the lost tribes of Israel to whom He offers Sion 'prepared and builded.'

Chapter 14 gives an account of Esdras rewriting the Holy Books. The last two chapters (15 and 16) contain stern prophecies regarding the woes which shall come upon the whole earth. 'Sorrows and great mournings; beginning of famine and great death . . . Behold, famine and plague, tribulation and anguish, are sent as scourges for amendment. But for all these things they shall not turn from their wickedness nor be always mindful of the scourges. Behold, victuals shall be so good cheap upon earth, that they shall think themselves to be in good case, and even then shall evils grow upon earth, sword, famine and great confusion . . . for the earth shall be wasted and the cities shall be cast down.' The Book concludes with an exhortation to Israel to guard her faith in the midst of all the trials with which she shall be visited. 'Then shall they be known who are My chosen; and they shall be tried as the gold in the fire. Hear, O ye my beloved, saith the Lord: behold, the days of trouble are at hand, but I will deliver you from the same. Be ye not afraid, neither doubt; for God is your guide.'

The Bible student who examines the Book will

be struck by certain important facts. In chapter 1 we read that Judah is cast off. 'Thus saith the Almighty Lord . . . thou Juda, wouldest not obey Me: I will turn Me to other nations, and unto those will I give My name, that they may keep My statutes. Seeing ye have forsaken Me, I will forsake you also . . . I gathered you together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings: but now, what shall I do unto you? I will cast you from My face . . . I sent unto you My servants the prophets, whom ye have taken and slain . . . Thus saith the Almighty Lord, your house is desolate' (2 Esdras 1 : 22-33). There is no excuse for rejecting this teaching for it is continued in the New Testament by our Lord Jesus Christ. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate' (*Matthew* 23: 37-38). Again, addressing the Chief Priests and Pharisees, He declared 'The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (*Matthew* 21, 43). The 'other nations' of chapter 1 are identified in chapter 2.

Esdras, an eminent official of Judah, is charged by the Lord with a visit to the ten tribes of Israel, from whom his people had long been separated. 'I, Esdras, received a charge of the Lord . . . that I should go unto Israel; but when I came unto them. they set me at nought, and despised the commandment of the Lord.' However, he delivers his message, telling them to 'Be ready to the reward of the kingdom' (2: 3, 35). Esdras is greatly concerned

for Israel and the covenants, and beseeches the Lord to let him have understanding. 'For it was not my mind to be curious of the high things, but of such as pass by us daily, namely, wherefore Israel is given up as a reproach to the heathen, and for what cause the people whom Thou hast loved is given over unto ungodly nations, and why the law of our forefathers is brought to nought, and the written covenants come to none effect' (2 *Esdras* 4: 23). The answers which follow are sometimes referred to as the Apocalypse of Esdras; hence the association with *Daniel* and the *Revelation*. These eschatological visions take up the major portion of the remainder of the Book. Eschatology is the 'doctrine of last things,' a theological term for the facts revealed in scripture regarding the final issue of things, the last judgment and the future state. The origin of the term is found in the phrases, 'the last day' and the 'last times' and similar expressions.

An examination of *Second Esdras* shows us that the Book contains question and answer regarding these last times. Chapter 7: 43, speaks of the day of doom (judgment) 'at the end of this time'; 8 gives a message for 'the last times (compare v. 63) 10:59, for 'the last days'; 12: 9, 'last times'; 13: 46, 'latter time'; 14: 9, 'Until the times be ended.' The Book, therefore, holds interest for all students who have the restoration of Israel and the fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant at heart.

The thoughtful student will here find a Cinderella in the world of sacred literature which may prove to be a charming princess.

Give alms of thy goods, and never turn thy face from any poor man; and then the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee (*Tobit*, 4).

The above is one of two quotations from the Book of Tobit included in 'The Order of the Administration of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion,' Book of Common Prayer.

The Book of Tobit relates the story of the trials and final deliverance of Tobit, a firstborn son of the House of Napthali, who with his tribe was carried captive by Shalmaneser (compare 2 *Kings* 17: 3-23). Notice particularly that the story deals with a section of the Ten Tribes of Israel in captivity; not Judah. It is helpful to examine a map of the period, such as is found in many Bibles, to get some idea of the vast distance travelled by the captives.

In addition to the above confirmation of the canonical scriptures, another is afforded in Tobit's first chapter by the reference to the tragic death of Sennacherib (compare *Isaiah* 37: 38), a scriptural fact recorded on a clay tablet now in the British Museum.

Tobit was a pious Israelite, an honourable man,

A Young Man and his Dog

Roddy McDowall in "Lassie Come Home"

(Photograph by courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures, Ltd., with grateful thanks to our friend the father of Britain's juvenile ambassador.)

The Book of Tobit is the only Book in all Scripture which includes a happy story of man and his fond companion (*Tobit* 5: 16).





who found favour in the court of King Shalmanesar, who made him his purveyor. Like Joseph of old, he purchased the corn and provisions for the king's household, superintending its distribution.

In the Vulgate translation of Tobit we read: 'The king gave him leave to go whithersoever he would, with liberty to do whatsoever he had a mind.' What strange cultural interests and queer foreign fashions Tobit must have seen! In his favourable position he was able to help his countrymen, particularly when Sennacherib, returning from his futile and tragic attempt to subdue Jerusalem, vented his rage upon the captive Israelites.

However, misfortune awaited Tobit. Reduced to poverty because he habitually buried his compatriots who were slaughtered by the king's order, his lot was made the unhappier by the loss, through an accident, of his eyesight. In his despair, even taunted by his wife—'Where are thy alms and thy righteous deeds?'—he maintained his faith.

The story takes us to Rages, a city of Ecbatana, a province in Media (see Bible map of Babylonia

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Threshing Time in Transjordan

(Photograph by Squadron Leader Peter Hill.)

How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough . . .
And whose talk is of bullocks? . . .
But he that giveth his mind to the law of the Most High . . .
Will seek out the wisdom of all the ancient and be occupied in prophecies.
(*Ecclesiasticus* 38: 25; 39: 1).

and Assyria), where Tobit's brother Raguel lived, with his wife Edna and daughter Sara, who was afflicted with an evil spirit. Sara turned to God in fervent prayer. At that same time Tobit also was praying to God, and the prayers of both were heard. The Angel Raphael was sent to convey a threefold blessing in answer to their prayers—(1) restraining the power of the evil spirit, (2) honourable marriage, (3) recovery of sight. Both Tobit and Sara knew the value of seeking God, and they each received a personal spiritual experience.

The narrative then records the delightful story of Tobias, the son of Tobit, who set forth with his dog, accompanied by the angel. This is the only happy story of man's fond companion to be found in sacred writings. The first night they lodged by the banks of the Tigris, where Tobias caught a fish, which plays an important part in the story. The angel tells Tobias to save the heart and liver of the fish, which are to be used as remedies for driving out the evil spirit; the gall is to be used for anointing the eyes. Sara and Tobias meet and undergo many ordeals, including the casting out of the evil spirit in Sara. After many beautiful prayers to God to have pity and to bless them, and to grant that they may grow old together, they are married. For them marriage meant mutual society, help and comfort in prosperity and adversity. The duration of the wedding feast was doubled to express the parents' joy at Sara's deliverance from adversity.

Our story goes back to the parents of Tobias and their anxiety for his return. Why is he detained? Perhaps there has been an accident! 'Woe is me! My son! Why did we send thee to go into a strange country?' (*Vulgate*). Every day the mother of

Tobias climbed to the top of the hill, looked longingly into the distance to see if her son was returning, and at last her reward came. One version has a delightful human touch: 'And she saw the dog coming at full speed.' So the family are reunited and Sara is welcomed into her husband's home. Tobias tells his father to be of good hope. He applied the gall of the fish to his father's eyes, and gradually his father receives his sight. Together they join in thanksgiving to God.

In this Book we find confirmation of the writings both of Amos (*Tobit* 2: 6, cf. *Amos* 8:10) and Jonah (*Tobit* 14: 4, cf. *Jonah* 3: 4), for Tobit shows the fulfilment of certain prophecies recorded in these Books. The Book closes with the advice of Tobit to Tobias to take his sons to Media, because of the prophecy of Jonah regarding the destruction of Nineveh; and before he died he heard of the destruction of that great city.

JUDITH

And there was none that gave her an evil word; for she feared God exceedingly (*Judith* 8: 8).

This Book takes its name from the heroine, Judith, a wealthy widow of the tribe of Simeon, 'of a goodly countenance and very beautiful to behold.'

The story relates a planned military campaign by 'the Assyrian King Nebuchodonosor, who lived at Nineveh.' His general, Holofernes, was sent at the head of an immense army to subjugate all the regions from Damascus to Egypt. After successful

operations he decided to go up against the land of Judea.

Faced with the perils of a coming invasion, the people of Judea fortified the hills which protected the entrances to their country. 'It was easy to stop them that would come up, because the passage was strait, for two men at the most . . . then every man of Israel cried to the Lord with great fervency, and with great vehemency did they humble their souls' (chapter 4).

Holofernes made enquiries regarding the people he was about to attack and was answered by Achior, an Ammonite, in an historical outline in which he showed the Israelites to be an invincible people except when they offended God. Holofernes, however, recognised no God but Nebuchodonosor (6) and proceeded with the campaign. After 40 days the besieged people urged their governor to surrender. This he consented to do provided they were not relieved within five days (7).

It is at this point we are introduced to our heroine, who counselled the governors to trust in God, saying, 'Remember what things he did to Abraham, and how he tried Isaac, and what happened to Jacob in Mesopotamia . . . for He hath not tried us in the fire as He did them for the examination of their hearts, neither hath He taken vengeance on us: but the Lord doth scourge them that come near unto Him, to admonish them' (8: 26-37).

Judith then proceeded with her plan of deliverance. Wearing her rich attire, and accompanied by her maid and one hundred men, she visited Holofernes' camp. She was at once conducted to the general, whose suspicions were disarmed by the

story she invented. On the fourth day of her visit Holofernes gave a banquet in her honour. When Judith arrived, Holofernes was completely taken in by her beauty and the snare she had set him. She provoked him to indulge in wine and so fall an easy victim to her design against his life. No sooner did he fall asleep than Judith, believing she was exacting revenge as a retribution for all his cruelties, seized his sword and struck off his head. She then returned to her own people with the grim trophy, which was displayed amid great rejoicings and thanksgiving to God, Who had delivered them from so great an enemy. The head of Holofernes was hung on the highest battlements, where it would be most conspicuous. All the warriors of Judea then rushed out upon the enemy and 'chased them with a great slaughter until they were past Damascus' (15: 5).

The closing chapter gives 'The Song of Judith,' a song of thanksgiving and praise to God, in which all the people joined, and in the closing words, 'there was none that made the children of Israel any more afraid in the days of Judith, nor a long time after her death.'

The secret of this Book is still unsolved. Perhaps it is history disguised. The Jewish Ency. suggests that with the very first words 'In the twelfth year of the reign of Nabuchodonosor, who reigned in Nineve,' the narrator gives his hearers a solemn wink. Although the Book offers problems from the historical point of view, it is said that 'the orthodoxy of Judith is unimpeachable.' Certainly the Book has a distinctly religious trend and is well calculated to inspire both patriotism and piety.

THE REST OF THE CHAPTERS OF ESTHER

O Lord, Lord the King Almighty: the whole world is in Thy Power, and if Thou hast appointed to save Israel, there is no man that can gainsay Thee (*Esther* 13: 9).

These additional chapters, numbered 10 to 16, must be studied with the canonical chapters.

To understand the story which Esther relates we need to know that it forms a further chapter in the story of the long war between Amalek (a descendant of Esau) and Israel, which had its origin in *Exodus* 17: 8-16. This is set forth in detail for us in Dr. W. P. Goard's booklet, *Esther, a Keystone of the Bible.** The writer of Esther assumes a general knowledge of all that has gone before in the historic chain of conflicts, and writes only that which is sufficient to bring the story up-to-date.

It is necessary to remember that Agag was the hereditary name or title of the kings of Amalek (cf. 1 *Samuel* 15: 8); and that Amalek and Agag are used interchangeably to designate that people (cf. *Numbers* 24: 7, 20). The leading character of the Book of Esther is Haman, the Agagite, 'the enemy of the Jews,' a fact stressed by the writer of *Esther* over and over again. 'Thus,' writes Dr. Goard, 'the Book simply shouts the information that Haman is Agag of the day, and that, as always from the beginning, he is the enemy.'

The story is simply told, as follows:

'Both the Jews and the remnant of Amalek were captives in the Babylonian Empire. Their constant war had not reached the point of final destruction

* The Covenant Publishing Co. Ltd., 3d. post free.

of either people. Haman, the hereditary Agag, was raised to second place in the Empire of Ahasuerus, and he designed to use his authority and influence to finish the tribal feud in favour of Amalek. To do this he planned to purchase from Ahasuerus the lives, or rather the death, of the Jews. Lacking the means, he opened a gambling hell, and for a year they cast Pur before him. With the proceeds of this he paid into the Treasury ten thousand talents of silver, and secured the death sentence against the Jews.

'Against his money Esther opposed her personal charm, and secured a like right for the Jews to destroy the followers of Haman. The result was that these two subject people were permitted to fight out their hereditary feud to the end, and Haman the Agagite, his ten sons and the Amalekite people perished in the struggle' (p. 9).

The additions to the canonical *Esther* supply it with a preface and a conclusion, and expand the narrative in three places. They were known to Josephus, and are followed by him in his narrative as part of the genuine history of Esther. They give the story of the Feast of Purim and the reason for keeping the feast (cf. *Esther* 9: 20-32).

Dr. Wm. Smith's *Bible Dictionary* informs us that the Feast of Purim was probably so called by the Jews in irony. According to modern custom, says this authority, as soon as the stars begin to appear candles are lit in token of rejoicing. People assemble in the synagogues, and after a short prayer and thanksgiving the reading of the Book of *Esther* commences. The reader translates the text as he goes along. When he comes to the name of Haman the whole congregation cry, 'May his name be

blotted out. . . . Cursed be Haman, blessed be Mardocheus.'

Prayers are followed by a reading from 'The Book of the Law' (*Exodus* 17: 8-16), which relates to the conflict with the Amalekites, the people of Agag, the ancestor of Aman (Haman) (*Esther* 3: 1).

. . . . .

The *Daily Express* (3.7.44) gives a topical note to the story. The General responsible for the capture of Minsk was 'the Jewish General Chernyakhovsky.' The *Daily Express* war correspondent, Alaric Jacob, reporting on the Russian break-through, writes: 'The biggest prize so far is Major-General Haman, Commandant of Bobruisk, and perhaps the blackest villain yet unhung in Russia. This notorious war criminal was at Orel, and wanted for authorising mass shootings there.' A footnote to his article reads: 'A Moscow message says there is no doubt that General Haman, butcher of Orel, will be tried as a war criminal. The penalty is hanging. A Biblical Haman, chief minister of Ahasuerus, was hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai' (*Esther* 7: 9-10).

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

She maketh all things new;
And in all ages entering into holy souls,
She maketh them friends of God and prophets.
(*Wisdom of Solomon* 7: 27).

This Book must not be regarded as a collection of 'wise and witty sayings'. It is an harmonious whole and should be studied as such. There are

nineteen chapters, the first nine commence by attacking the unbelief and pessimism which the writer found in his day, and call attention to the blessings to be earned from seeking God's ways, and the joy which comes from living in harmony with Him. Chapters 10-19 take us further, illustrating the foregoing by drawing upon historical events particularly in the early history of Israel. The careful reader will be quick to note the ordered development of thought and the wide range of teaching covered.

Parts of the Book are read in the Church of England during October and November (cf. 'The Calendar with the Table of Lessons. Book of Common Prayer').

The wise counsel with which the writer commences is as sound today as when it was written. We must be upright in thought 'for froward thoughts separate from God' (1: 3); upright in speech 'for wisdom is a loving spirit; and will not acquit a blasphemer of his words' (v. 6). 'Therefore beware of murmuring, which is unprofitable; and refrain your tongue from back-biting: for there is no word so secret, that shall go for nought; and the mouth that belieth slayeth the soul' (v. 11). We then proceed to learn of the awful consequences of man's sin, which is the origin of death. Since wisdom is the source of immortality, how strongly is man's folly contrasted therewith, 'for God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own eternity. Nevertheless, through envy of the devil came death into the world; and they that do hold of his side do find it. But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God (2: 23-24; 3: 1).

In passing we may mention that an extract from

chapter 5 is quoted in the official publication *Bomber Command*. The wording of the Revised Version of the Apocrypha reads:—'Then shall the right aiming thunderbolts go abroad; and from the clouds, as from a welldrawn bow, shall they fly to the mark, and as from an engine of war shall be hurled hailstones. . . .' (5: 21-22).

Chapters 6 to 9 speak of Wisdom, which is 'the breath of the power of God, a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty' (7: 25), as a guide to practical and intellectual life. Wisdom must be the guide of rulers, 'for power is given you of the Lord, and sovereignty from the Highest' (6: 3). But wisdom is not reserved for them alone; it is open to all, 'the multitude of the wise is the welfare of the world' (6: 24). Nor is it difficult to obtain; indeed, we are told 'she is easily . . . found of such that seek her' (6: 12).

In chapter 7 the attributes of wisdom are counted up to the number of twenty-one. This chapter, together with chapter 8, amplifies 1 *Kings* 3, relating to Solomon's proverbial wisdom.

Chapter 9 closes this section of the Book with a prayer for the gift of wisdom, 'for the thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and our devices are but uncertain . . . and hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us; but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out? And Thy counsel who hath known except Thou give wisdom, and send Thy Holy Spirit from above?'

Having claimed our attention and interest regarding 'Wisdom,' in its spiritual, intellectual and moral aspects, the Book proceeds to draw illustrations from the history of the patriarchs and from

the early history of Israel. The contrasts provided in these illustrations serve to show us that Wisdom has always been at the root of success, whilst the lack of it has been the cause of failure.

Chapter 10 is an historical recital telling of what wisdom did in guiding Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and the children of Israel. Although no names are mentioned, the incidents to which reference is made are easily identified. The Flood is spoken of in this way:— 'The earth being drowned with the Flood, wisdom again preserved it and directed the course of the righteous in a piece of wood of small value,' whilst Lot's wife received notice in the following words:— 'A standing pillar of salt is a monument of an unbelieving soul.'

In chapters 11 to 19 history moves on to Egypt and Canaan, where wisdom is seen in the chastisement of these peoples and in the salvation of Israel. Like many subsequent enemy plans, the plan of Egypt did not materialise. In fact, Egypt was punished with her own original thought (cf. 18: 5-13).

It has been said that manna must have been a monotonous diet; but we are assured in chapter 16: 20-21 that it was 'able to content every man's delight, and agreeing to every taste. For thy sustenance declared thy sweetness unto thy children, and serving to the appetite of the eater, tempered itself to every man's liking.'

Chapter 17 gives vivid details of the three days' darkness referred to in Exodus 10: 21-23: 'Even darkness which may be felt.' It is compared to 'being in prison without bars.' The whistling wind, the melodious song of the birds, the pleasing sound

of running water, the sound of animals' hurrying feet, all the sounds which in daylight hold no fears, seemed to rebound like the echo from hollow mountains. These things made the Egyptians swoon with fear, imagining monstrous apparitions. Over Egypt only was this darkness; Israel had 'very great light' in her dwellings (*Exodus* 10: 23).

In this Book we are shown the very opposite of wisdom in the growth of idolatry, the worship of nature, of images and of deified man. There are gems of satire here at the expense of the makers of idols. Such folly is contrasted with true worship. Idolatry in its rise and progress presents the false substitute, for the revelation of God which had been entrusted to Israel. This revelation must be guarded and preserved throughout the generations, as must the people to whom it was entrusted. Hence we read in the climax of these writings: 'For in all things, O Lord, Thou didst magnify Thy people, and glorify them, neither didst Thou lightly regard them; but didst assist them in every time and place.'

ECCLESIASTICUS

Be willing to hear every godly discourse; and let not the parables of understanding escape thee (*Ecclesiasticus* 6: 35).

Ecclesiasticus and *Wisdom* are classified as 'Wisdom Literature.' The writings were much esteemed in the early Christian Church. Augustine regarded them as the work of a 'prophet' and 'the Word of God.' To this day considerable use is made of this Book in the Church of England, as will be

seen from the Calendar with Table of Lessons, Book of Common Prayer. According to Jerome, the original Hebrew title was 'Proverbs,' but it became known as 'The Church Book of the Apocrypha.' Hence, in the Vulgate, it was called *Ecclesiasticus*—'Belonging to, or used in, the Church.'

It is not possible to give an analysis of the Book. Most of it is written in the style of the Book of Proverbs, and consists of sentences in couplets of wisdom, reflecting many gems of thought. For example:—

'Strive for the truth unto death,
'And the Lord shall fight for thee' (4: 28).
'Forsake not an old friend;
'For the new is not comparable to him' (9: 10).
'The bee is little among such as fly;
'But her fruit is the chief of sweet things' (11: 3).
'In the division of the nations of the whole earth
He set a ruler over every people;
But Israel is the Lord's portion' (17: 17).

The couplets cover a wide range and form a compendium of ethical teaching, giving regulations of conduct under almost all possible circumstances and in every relationship of life; the training of children; the treatment of servants; friend and foe; rich and poor. There is advice to the conversationalist (32: 7-9); to the public speaker (33: 4), and to his audience (27: 7). Indeed, the writer seems to have been a collector of shrewd sayings and instructive proverbs. He describes himself 'as one that gathereth after the grape-gatherers; by the blessing of the Lord I profited, and filled my winepress like a gatherer of grapes. Consider that I laboured not for myself only, but for all them that seek learning' (33: 16-17).

Chapter 36 includes a national prayer most fitting for present day use:—'Have mercy upon us, O Lord God of all, and behold us; and send thy fear upon all the nations that seek not after thee. Lift up thy hand against the strange nations, and let them see thy power. As thou wast sanctified in us before them; so be thou magnified among them before us. And let them know thee, as we have known thee, that there is no God but only thou, O God. . . . Smite in sunder the heads of the rulers of the heathen, that say, There is none other but we. Gather all the tribes of Jacob together, and inherit thou them, as from the beginning. O Lord, have mercy upon the people that is called by thy name, and upon Israel, whom thou hast named thy firstborn.'

Chapters 44 onwards, in praise of famous men, seems to form a section to itself. It reminds us of the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which our good friend Dr. Goard called 'mileposts along the route of Israel's march down the ages.'

This Book must have proved a guide, philosopher and friend to many of its readers. Certainly it is full of sound instruction. In the words of chapter 50: 27: 'Jesus the son of Sirach of Jerusalem hath written in this book the instruction of understanding and knowledge, who out of his heart poured forth wisdom. Blessed is he that shall be exercised in these things; and he that layeth them up in his heart shall become wise. For if he do them, he shall be strong to all things: for the light of the Lord leadeth him who giveth wisdom to the godly. Blessed be the Lord for ever. Amen, Amen.'

Be of good cheer, O My children,
Cry unto the Lord,
And He shall deliver you from the power
and hand of the enemies (*Baruch* 4: 21).

This is the only Book of the Apocrypha which follows the style of the Prophets. As with all such writings, it is essential that the reader has a knowledge of the historical background of the times. This background is provided in the close of the 2nd Book of Kings, and in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, to whom Baruch was both scribe and companion (*Jeremiah* 36: 4 and 32). The Ten Tribes of Israel and a large section of Judah, had long since been deported. The fact of their deportation and the reasons therefore (2 *Kings* 17) were known to the remaining people of Judah, Baruch's compatriots, who were guilty of the same crimes.

Chapters 1 and 2 contain a confession which reflects the unhappy conditions of the day. The calamities which had befallen Judah were due to the fact that they had forsaken God's Law. It must be borne in mind that God had called Israel, had instructed, guided and shepherded her to the end that she might be a national witness, showing forth the blessings to be obtained by living under the Divine Law in all departments of national life. It was to be her privilege to be God's demonstration nation in a world which constantly struggled against adversities resulting from man's attempt to govern himself. When Israel fails in her Divinely appointed task, she automatically brings upon herself the same distresses suffered by other erring nations. These tribulations are foreshadowed in the Law

itself. Baruch bemoans the fact that there is no acknowledgment of transgression, and no thought of repentance by the nation. He acknowledges that the unhappy state of the nation is 'According to the things that are written in the Law of Moses.' Judah has become 'a reproach and a desolation . . . because we have sinned against the Lord our God, and have not been obedient unto His voice.'

The prayer is continued in chapter 3, when Baruch pleads for the Lord's mercy. 'O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, the soul in anguish, the troubled spirit, crieth unto Thee. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy; for Thou art merciful; and have pity upon us, because we have sinned against Thee.'

In chapter 4, Baruch calls attention to the forsaken Law 'that endureth for ever,' and calls upon his people to repent. 'Turn thee, O Jacob, and take hold of it; walk in the presence of the light thereof.' Throughout his Book, Baruch shows a marked devotion to the Law of the Lord. He has a firm conviction in God's promises, both as regards punishment for sin and ultimate restoration. Having this latter in mind, he sweeps on in the close of this chapter, and again in chapter 5, to address words

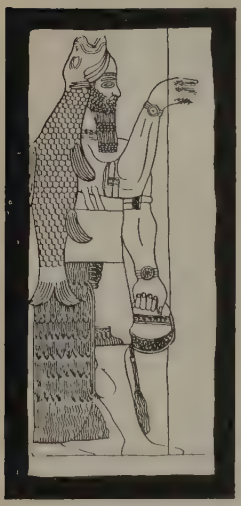
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Harvesting in Transjordan

(Photograph by Squadron Leader Peter Hill.)

The Lord Almighty is God alone,
And beside Him there is no other Saviour.
. . .
He maketh the understanding to abound . . .
As Jordan in the time of the harvest.
(*Ecclesiasticus* 24: 24-26).

Heathen Gods



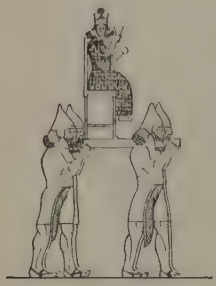
DAGON
The Fish-God
1. Sam. 5.



NEBO
God of
Intelligence
Isa. 46 v1.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me
Exodus 20. v. 3

NISROCH
Eagle Headed Deity
Isa. 37.v38.



Warriors carrying a god in procession
(Detail)

Isa. 46. v 7.



which reflect the majestic passages of Isaiah, as, moved by the Spirit, he speaks of the glories of the restoration yet to be.

The sixth chapter bears the title 'The Epistle of Jeremy' (Jeremiah), 'a copy of an epistle, which Jeremy sent unto them which were led captive into Babylon.' Jeremiah, too, stressed the fact that the unhappy events were the result of national sin, i.e., transgressions of God's Law. The people were to be deported for a set time 'and after that, I will bring you away peaceable from thence'—a prophetic promise which was literally fulfilled (cf. *Ezra* 1).

This letter is a declamation against idols. 'They are no gods'. 'Fear them not.' 'How can a man think or say they are gods?' Jeremiah showed an intimate acquaintance with his subject: 'Now shall ye see in Babylon gods of silver, and of gold, and of wood, borne upon shoulders, which cause the nations to fear. Beware therefore that ye in no wise be like to strangers, neither be ye afraid of them, when ye see the multitude before them and behind them, worshipping them. But say ye in your hearts, O Lord, we must worship Thee.'

For all its tragedy, the chapter is not without its humour. The Prophet mockingly shows the vanity of idols. Workmen polish the tongues of the idols, yet they cannot speak. They light candles to them which they cannot see. Sometimes priests took for themselves the gold and silver with which the idols were adorned, yet they did not complain.

Heathen Gods

(Reproduced by courtesy of the Editor of *Youth Message*; drawn by Victor J. Lee, Art Editor.)

Idols are no better than scarecrows in a garden, for birds and cats come and sit on their heads. 'By this ye know they are no gods: therefore fear them not.' Though they carried an axe and a dagger, they could not save themselves from war and thieves. They were borne upon the shoulders of men because they had no feet. The epistle reminds us of Isaiah's forty-sixth chapter on the same subject. 'They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. Remember this, and show yourselves men . . . O ye transgressors.' (vv. 6-8). The heathen must carry his idols; but, as Isaiah declares, and Moses reminds us, God carries Israel in His Everlasting Arms.

THE SONG OF THE THREE HOLY CHILDREN

When thou walkest through the fire
thou shalt not be burned;
Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee—
(*Isaiah* 43, 2).

The Book of Daniel provides us with a helpful introduction to this Book. The 'Three Holy Children' were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azarias, companions of Daniel, then in captivity in Babylon. Apparently the youths were of the Royal House of

David (cf. *Daniel* 1 : 3). Some codices (manuscripts) read 'sons of Israel of the seed-royal.'

Nebuchadnezzar commanded his High Chamberlain to select some young men of noble family 'and the kinsmen of Zedekiah their king, such as were remarkable for the beauty of their bodies and the comeliness of their countenances, and deliver them into the hands of their tutors, and to the improvement to be made by them. . . . Now among these there were four of the family of Zedekiah. . . . These the king had in esteem, and continued to love, because of the very excellent temper they were of, and because of their application to learning, and the progress they had made in wisdom' (Josephus' Antiq. Book x, chap. x, para. 1). The entrance qualifications are given in *Daniel* 1 : 4. The course lasted for three years (v. 5). The intelligence and skill of these youths was God-given (*Daniel* 1, 17). At the end of the period the king commanded these young men to be brought before him for his examination. The measure of the Divine gift is seen in the king's testimony that in all matters of wisdom and understanding 'He found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his realm' (*Daniel* 1 : 20).

According to ancient custom, as in the case of Joseph of Egypt, the names of Daniel's companions were changed by the High Chamberlain to the more familiar Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

As the introductory note to the Apocrypha informs us, the song 'Followeth in the third chapter of *Daniel* after this place—fell down into the midst of the burning furnace—v. 23.' The purpose of the book is to give an account of these three men in

their awful ordeal after their refusal to worship the golden image. Abednego (Azarias, whose name means 'God has strength') prayed to God for deliverance. In his prayer his appeal goes back to the fathers of his people who had been so blessed by God's help in earlier days. 'Cause not Thy mercy to depart from us, for Thy beloved Abraham's sake, for Thy servant Isaac's sake and for Thy holy Israel's sake (v. 12). Nebuchadnezzar had demanded they worship an image, which would involve a breach of the first and second Commandments. Azarias appealed to the One God 'the only God' (v. 22) whose honour he sought to uphold.

The answer to his prayer is graphically detailed in *Daniel* chap. 3. The 'Three Holy Children' protected by the Angel of the Lord were released unhurt, whilst the Chaldeans round about the furnace were consumed by the fire. Then follows (v. 29) the Song of Triumph 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers: and to be praised and glorified for ever.' We of Israel-Britain still sing it. It is part of our National Church Service and is found under the title 'Benedicite' in the Church of England Morning Service (Book of Common Prayer).

Comparatively few people are familiar with the story of the wanderings of the Israelites across Europe to the prophesied appointed place (2 *Samuel* 7: 10), the Isles of the Sea, afar off (cp. *Isaiah* 24: 15; 49: 1; *Jeremiah* 31: 10, etc.). Yet there is little excuse for members of the Church of England to be ignorant of the fact that we are descended from Abraham and are the children of Israel. Again and again this is acknowledged in the words of the church service. Indeed, it is an amazing fact that the people of the Church of England Prayer Book

are not the people of England but the people of Israel. The whole ritual is understandable only if we grasp the salient fact that it is the ritual *of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, and naturally the services teem with references to our forefathers.

Furthermore, the Preface to the Authorised Version of the Bible does not permit a second sentence to pass without identifying England with Sion. The dedication to King James I is followed by the words, 'Great and Manifold were the blessings, most dread Sovereign, which Almighty God, the Father of all Mercies, bestowed upon us the people of *England*, when He first sent Your Majesty's Royal Person to rule and reign over us. For whereas it was the expectation of many, who wished not well unto our *Sion* . . .' The words 'England' and 'Sion' are printed in italics in order to stress their importance.

It must be noted that the Book of Common Prayer was not merely ordained by ecclesiastical authority; it was given to us by Act of Parliament. The object of the book is to ensure, as far as possible, that all of His Majesty's subjects have a comprehensive and harmonious knowledge and belief in the Word of God, and thus are guided to a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Book of Common Prayer is designed to represent a public affirmation of our national faith. The Encyclopædia Britannica, 9th Ed., Vol. VIII, Article *England*, tell us: 'In 1549 an English Prayer Book, carefully drawn up from the old service-books of a body of divines, accepted by convocation and parliament, was given to the Church, and the use of it was made compulsory by an Act of Uniformity. Archbishop Cranmer,

zealously bent on the work of reformation, earnestly invited all the most distinguished foreign reformers to visit England that, if possible, the lovers of reformation might agree to a confession of faith, to be opposed to the confession of the Romish Church then being formulated and settled at the Council of Trent.'

At this time Archbishop Cranmer asserted before Parliament that in the Prayer Book, which he asked might be authorised by that body for general use in the Church of England, were the same prayers which had been in use in Britain for over fifteen hundred years. 'If the Queen's Highness will grant thereunto I . . . will by God's Grace defend not only the Common Prayers of the Church . . . but also the doctrine and religion set out by our said Sovereign Lord, King Edward VI, to be more pure and according to God's Word than any other that has been used in England these thousand years. . . . The same doctrine and usage is to be followed which was in the Church fifteen hundred years past, and we shall prove that the order of the Church set out at this present in this realm by Act of Parliament is the same that was used in the Church fifteen hundred years past. . . .' *The British Reformers, Vol. 8; Writing of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Cranmer*, p. 271.

The Introduction to *The Teacher's Prayer Book: being the Book of Common Prayer, with introductions, analysis, notes and a commentary on the Psalter* (1st Edition), by the Right Rev. Alfred Barry, D.D., D.C.L., tells us: 'The English Prayer Book embodies, in tangible form, the chief principles of the English Reformation. It was no new book, drawn up by the religious leaders of the sixteenth century, but was mainly a reformed re-publication of those

old Services which had grown up through nearly a thousand years of English Christianity, being themselves developments of the liturgies of *an even remoter antiquity*.' (Italics ours.).

Such claims for the antiquity of the doctrines and order of the Church take us back to the dawn of Christianity when, according to Cranmer, they originated. This is a matter of great interest when we bear in mind the traditions of Glastonbury.

A glance at the responses which we daily repeat will show (*a*) that Christian doctrine cannot be disassociated from the O.T., and (*b*) the Scriptures used identify the British with Israel.

In the General Confession we acknowledge that '*We* have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep . . . *we* have offended against Thy holy laws,' which were given to and have been practised by Israel only. Our trials and tribulations are direct results of these offences; hence we confess to being 'miserable offenders.'

In the Venite (*Psalm* 95) we declare that '*We* are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand,' and that *our* forefathers grieved Him in the wilderness.

In the Benedictus (*Luke* 1: 68-79) we bless Jehovah the Lord God of Israel in that 'He has visited and redeemed *His* people; and hath raised up a mighty salvation for *us:* in the house of His servant David; . . . that *we* should be saved from *our* enemies . . . to perform the mercy promised to *our* forefathers: and to remember His holy covenant; to perform the oath which He sware to *our* forefather Abraham: that He would give us; that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies: might serve Him without fear . . .'

In the Magnificat (*Luke* 1: 46-55) we say: 'He remembering His mercy hath holpen His servant Israel; as He promised to *our* forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.'

In the Cantate (*Psalm* 98) we thank the Lord for remembering 'His mercy and truth toward the House of Israel: and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.'

In the Nunc Dimittis (*Luke* 2: 29-32) we declare that our eyes have seen His salvation 'Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of Thy people Israel.'

Again, in the Te Deum: 'O Lord, save Thy people: and bless thine heritage.'

Now, all these are specific terms, which belong to Israel and to no other people. Again, we entreat: 'Make Thy chosen people joyful. . . . O Lord, save Thy people and bless thine inheritance.' We should have no right to pray in these words if we were not the House of Israel.

THE HISTORY OF SUSANNA

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour (*Exodus* 20: 16).

The story of Susanna which is 'set apart from the beginning of *Daniel* is worthy of consideration for several reasons. It shows the efficacy of prayer, a matter which is stressed throughout the Apocrypha, and the wisdom of God's Law. But apart from these, it is particularly helpful in giving us an insight into life among the captives in Babylon.

Susanna (the Lily) was the wife of Joachim, a

wealthy and prominent member of the Tribe of Judah, then in captivity in Babylon. The local synagogue was situated in Joachim's garden, so that the family was well known and respected. Certain of the elders and judges used the premises as a place to which those who required legal advice could come for consultations.

Two of these men, attracted by Susanna's beauty, and having no sense of honour or gratitude for the hospitality of their host and hostess, were prepared to break any law to achieve their ambition. Knowing that they could not succeed except by fraud, they took occasion to try to force Susanna to give way to them. When their endeavours failed, they falsely accused their hostess of adultery, with the result that Susanna was condemned by the Council and sentenced to death, the legal punishment for adultery (*Leviticus* 20: 10). Susanna conscious of her innocence and helpless in the absence of witnesses in her favour, resorted to prayer. 'Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said, O everlasting God, that knowest the secrets, that knowest all things before they be: Thou knowest that they have borne false witness against me, and, behold, I must die; whereas I never did such things as these men have maliciously invented against me. And the Lord heard her voice.' (vv. 42-44).

Daniel, then a young man, came into the Court and called for a new trial on the grounds that the witnesses had committed perjury. In a masterly manner he convicted the two elders by separating them, so that their own testimony proved them guilty of slander and bearing false witness. Thus innocence was established, Susanna was publicly cleared and the Law vindicated.

It would seem that the story gives us the start of Daniel's public reputation for wisdom which lasted throughout his long life. 'From that day forth was Daniel had in great reputation in the sight of the people.'

Shakespeare evidently was familiar with this story, since he puts into Shylock's mouth the words 'A Daniel come to judgment' (*Merchant of Venice*, Act iv, scene 1).

Daniel's rebuke to the second offender: 'O thou seed of Chanaan, and not of Judah . . .' reminds us that many of Judah made marriages forbidden by the Law of the Lord, hence the 'show of countenance' (cf. *Ezra* 9: 1-2 with *Deuteronomy* 7: 1-6). From the time it was made known that the Messiah was to come through Abraham, the 'enemy' established themselves in the territory in which Abraham's seed was to grow. They occupied Jerusalem until such time as David won that city. Thereafter it seems that by intermarriage they sought to regain what they had lost. The success with which their efforts met is seen in the words of *Ezekiel* 16: 2-3:— 'Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem; thy birth and thy nativity is in the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.' These same inhabitants of Jerusalem even made the audacious claim that they were the 'chosen people.' 'Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the House of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession' (*Ezekiel* 11: 15). The struggle con-

tinued long after the period covered by Susanna. There is little doubt that the descendants of these people were still among the remnant of Judah when our Lord Jesus Christ came. Certainly He was faced with 'enemy' seed, for He addressed certain of those in Jerusalem in His day, saying: 'Ye are of your father the devil' (*John* 8, 44).

THE HISTORY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF BEL AND THE DRAGON

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them (*Exodus* 20: 3 and 5).

In 'The history of the destruction of Bel and the Dragon' we have further additions to the Canonical Book of Daniel. As the heading in the Apocrypha informs us, this section is 'cut off from the end of *Daniel*.'

Daniel was now an old man. He had lived to see the fall of the Babylonian Empire and the rise of the Medo-Persian. Throughout his many years, which must amount to eighty, he had been a faithful witness for God, a work which did not cease in his old age, as these stories show.

Bel was one of the chief objects of worship in the city of Babylon. Daniel, true to his principles, refused to worship such a monstrosity. When questioned on the subject by Cyrus the king, Daniel answered 'I may not worship idols made with hands, but the living God . . .' (v. 5). In proof of the fact that Bel was 'a living God,' Cyrus pointed to the vast amount of food it consumed

every day 'twelve great measures of fine flour and forty sheep, and six vessels of wine' (v. 3).

Daniel courageously told the king that the god Bel, being clay within and brass without, could neither eat nor drink. The perplexed king called the priests and said: 'If ye tell me not who this is that devoureth these expenses, ye shall die' (v. 8). The priests confidently arranged with the king to set out the food and wine, inviting him to shut the door, seal it with his own signet and come again on the morrow. In the morning the king and Daniel went to the Temple and found the king's seal intact. They opened the door and looked upon the table; all the food had gone. Then the king cried triumphantly 'Great art thou, O Bel, and with thee is no deceit at all.' But Daniel laughed. 'Behold now the pavement and mark well whose footsteps are these'; for suspecting trickery on the part of the priests, he had had the floor strewn with fine ashes. The priests' wives and children had entered by a private door and had themselves consumed everything upon the table. When the king saw that he was the victim of deceit, he was very angry. 'Therefore the king slew them, and delivered Bel into Daniel's power to destroy him and his Temple' (v. 22).

In the same place there was 'a great dragon which they of Babylon worshipped.' The king, wishing to justify at least one of the gods, said to Daniel: 'Wilt thou also say that this is of brass? Lo, he liveth, he eateth and drinketh; thou canst not say that he is no living god: therefore worship him.' Again Daniel took up the king's words and gave them their true application: 'I will worship the Lord my God: for He is the living God.' Daniel

asked leave to slay the dragon without sword or staff, and the king agreed. 'Then Daniel took pitch and fat and hair, and did seethe them together and made lumps thereof: this he put in the dragon's mouth, and so the dragon burst asunder: and Daniel said, Lo, these are the gods ye worship.' The demonstration showed that since the gods were powerless to help themselves, equally they must be powerless to help others.

The infuriated populace demanded that Daniel should be cast into the lions' den; but from this ordeal Daniel escaped unharmed.

The incidents had a marked effect upon King Cyrus, for the story closes with the king's prayer: 'Great art Thou, O Lord God of Daniel, and there is none other beside Thee.'

PRAYER OF MANASSES

Thou hast appointed repentance unto me
that am a sinner.

The history of Manasses (Manasseh), the 13th King of Judah, son of Hezekiah, is written in 2 *Chronicles* 33, and 2 *Kings* 21. He ascended the throne at the age of twelve years, and reigned for fifty-five years, the longest of any of the House of David. He must have been born about the time when the Lord gave his father the memorable deliverance from Sennacherib (2 *Kings* 19). At that time, Judah had been given a severe lesson. Vast numbers of the population had been transported by the Assyrians; but the 'remnant' (2 *Kings* 21: 14) of Judah which was now left, strayed

far from the ways of the Lord. Probably Manasses fell into the hands of bad advisers, for, during his reign, he undid all the good that his father had done. 'He did what was evil in the sight of the Eternal, following the abominable practices of the pagans . . . he rebuilt the shrines which his father Hezekiah had demolished, he erected altars to Baal, made images of Astaret. . . . He burned his children in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom, he practised augury, sorcery and witchcraft, he instituted mediums and wizards; he did ample evil in the sight of the Eternal, to vex Him. He put a carved image of an idol he had made, in the Temple of God, though God had said to David and his son Solomon, 'Within this Temple at Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the Clans of Israel, I will grant my Presence for all time; never will I send Israel wandering out of the land I have given to their fathers, if only they will be mindful to obey exactly all my commands, the laws and rules and regulations laid down for them by Moses' (2 *Chronicles* 33: 8—Moffatt).

The prophets, speaking in the name of Jehovah, remonstrated with the king, and threatened his capital with the fall that had overtaken the capital city of Ten-Tribed Israel; but remonstration was in vain. The career which defied all attempts from within to stop it, was brought to a close by judgment from without. The Assyrian army again descended on Judah and took Manasses captive.

The severe lesson had its effect, and Manasses was converted from his evil ways. 'When he was in trouble, he besought the Eternal his God, humbling himself low before the God of his fathers; he prayed to Him, and the Eternal listened to him,

answered his entreaty, and brought him back to his kingdom at Jerusalem. Then Manasseh realised that the Eternal was God (2 *Chronicles* 33: 12-13—Moffatt).

'Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer to his God . . . Behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel' (2 *Chronicles* 33: 18). No record of the prayer is found in any Canonical Book. 'The Prayer of Manasses, King of Judah, when he was holden captive in Babylon' supplies the omission. Its eloquent phraseology is derived largely from the Old Testament. In language of outstanding beauty we are given the thoughts of a penitent man in this humble prayer for forgiveness. Notice the double call to God 'I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned.' This is a well-known Bible mode of emphasis, whilst the expression 'I bow the knee of my heart' is an expression eloquent of real penitence.

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE MACCABEES

The victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host; but strength cometh from heaven.
(1 *Maccabees* 3: 19).

An 'historical gap' of about four centuries stretches between the close of the Old Testament Canon and the opening of the New. The Canonical Books tell us how the remnant of Judah returned to Palestine from captivity in Babylon, when the great Babylonian Empire had given place to the Persian. The Persian Empire continued for about a century after the close of the Old Testament Canon, and then fell before the growing might of Greece

under Alexander of Macedonia. Alexander died in 323 B.C. After his death his Empire was in a state of turmoil for twenty years or more, during which time it suffered several sub-divisions. After the battle of Ipsus (301 B.C.) it was divided into four kingdoms, as foretold in *Daniel* 8: 22, viz. (i) Macedon, (ii) Thrace, (iii) Syria with Babylon, (iv) and Egypt with Arabia and Palestine. Egypt and Syria survived the longest of the four, retaining their status until the first century B.C., when they were absorbed by the Romans.* The period covered by the First Book of Maccabees is from 175 B.C. to (135 B.C.—the dates must be regarded as approximate.

Chapter 1 of the First Book of Maccabees takes up the story with a brief notice of Alexander's conquests in building up his Empire. After his

* A survey of the whole "historical chasm" is given in "*An Outline of the Seventy Weeks Nation*," the Rev. Alban Heath, The Covenant Publishing Co., Ltd. 2s. 3d. post free. Our thanks are due to the publishers for permission to reproduce from this book the chronological table which appears on pages 65-67.

"Be ye men of valour"

(Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the Editor of *Youth Message*.)

Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valour and be in readiness for the conflict, for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altars. As the will of God is in heaven, even so let Him do.

(*Maccabees* 3: 58-60).

Paraphrased by the Rt. Hon. WINSTON S. CHURCHILL, P.C., O.M., C.H., M.P., in his first broadcast speech as Prime Minister, during the Battle of Britain.



death 'his servants bear rule . . . and evils were multiplied in the earth. And there came out of them a wicked root, Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes', (the Illustrious) whose conduct earned for him the nickname Ephimanes (the frantic; the madman). (175 B.C.).

'In those days there went out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen . . . Then certain of the people were so forward herein, that they went to the king, who gave licence to do after the ordinances of the heathen' (vv. 11-13). A Greek gymnasium was erected in Jerusalem. The Temple was desecrated, and became the scene of idolatrous sacrifices.

A dark and troubled era followed. Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, made war against Egypt and 'got the strong cities . . . and took the spoils thereof' (vv. 18-19). Returning from Egypt he went up against Jerusalem, took the city, 'entered proudly into the sanctuary,' and took away the treasures. Returning again two years later 'He fell suddenly upon the city, and smote it very sore, and destroyed much people' (v. 30). Not content with these atrocities, Antiochus began a furious persecution of the Jews, issuing an edict requiring all people under his sceptre to worship the same god. Indeed, everything was done to the end that the Jews 'might forget the law and change the

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(Photograph by F. Lane.)

The bee is little among such as fly; but her fruit is the chief of sweet things.
(*Ecclesiasticus* 11: 3).

ordinances,' the observance of which was made a capital offence (168 B.C.).

One can scarcely be surprised that such blasphemous tyranny should spread the seeds of revolt. Mattathias 'an honourable and great man' of the city of Modin, a descendant of Eleazar the elder son of Aaron, was visited by emissaries of Antiochus who urged him to conform to the commands of the heathen king. Mattathias refused to consent. 'Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him . . . yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances' (2: 19-21). Mattathias and his five sons, Joannan, Simon, Judas 'who was called Maccabeus,' Eleazar and Jonathan (2: 2-5) with 'many that sought after justice and judgment, went down into the wilderness and dwelt there' (v. 29). Thus, the stage was set for an organised revolt.

Just before his death, Mattathias, calling to mind the acts of 'our fathers' and how each was rewarded by God, counselled his sons to 'fear not the words of a sinful man . . . today he shall be lifted up, and tomorrow he shall not be found . . . Wherefore, ye my sons, be valiant, and show yourselves men on behalf of the law; for by it shall ye obtain glory' (vv. 62-64).

The remainder of the Book narrates the exploits of the five sons, all of whom were inspired with a fiery zeal for the cause of the Lord. Chapters 3 to 9: 22, detail their struggles under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus who was appointed captain by his father. Judas was well chosen for the appointment 'for he pursued the wicked and sought them out, and burnt up those that vexed his people.

Wherefore the wicked shrunk for fear of him' (3: 5-6). His brilliant successes and his reverses are chronicled with equal candour, forming one of the grandest stories in history of a great soldier of God.

Chapter 3 describes his victory over Apollonius, who led an army from Samaria; and also his defeat of Seron, a prince of the army of Syria, whom 'Judas went forth to meet with a small company: who, when they saw the host coming to meet them, said unto Judas, How shall we be able, being so few, to fight against so great a multitude and so strong (vv. 16-17). Judas encouraged his followers with the stirring words of verses 18-22. 'It is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hand of a few; and with the God of heaven it is all one, to deliver with a great multitude or a small company.' The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill's famous words, 'Never was so much owed by so many to so few', seem to be a reflection of vv. 17-18 of this chapter. It seems as though Mr. Churchill is a student of the Apocrypha, since he chose the closing words of this chapter as the climax to one of his fighting addresses to the nation in the Battle of Britain.

In this same chapter we learn that Judas organised his forces according to the Divine Law for warfare (vv. 55-56), granting exemptions as provided therein. 'As for such as were building houses, or had betrothed wives, or were planting vineyards, or were fearful, those he commanded that they should return, every man to his own house according to the Law.'

A further attempt to overcome Judas Maccabeus was made when a large army was sent from Antioch under the command of Nicanor and Georgias. But they too were put to flight (chapter 4).

In the following year (165 B.C.), Judas Maccabeus was successful against a still larger army under Lysias. This triumph enabled him to obtain possession of the Temple at Jerusalem. His first act was to cleanse the polluted sanctuary, and hold a thanksgiving service 'praising the God of heaven who had given them good success' (4: 55).

We have seen the cause of the Maccabean revolt, its outbreak and the series of God-given victories which resulted in the freeing of Jerusalem.

'Now when the nations round about heard that the altar was built, and the sanctuary renewed as before, it displeased them very much. Wherefore they thought to destroy the generation of Jacob that was among them, and thereupon they began to slay and destroy the people' (5: 1-2). A number of engagements followed as Judas Maccabeus went to the rescue of his persecuted brethren.

Shortly afterwards, Antiochus, the 'Madman', came to a pathetic end, and confessed that the evils which had plagued him were the results of the wrongs he had done. 'Now I remember the evils that I did at Jerusalem. . . . I perceive therefore that for this cause these troubles are come upon me' (6: 12-13).

His son, Antiochus Eupator, was enthroned by Lysias (164 B.C.). The new king massed an army of 100,000 footmen and 20,000 horsemen, supported by a 'secret weapon' in the form of thirty-two elephants. 'Upon the beasts were there strong towers of wood, which covered every one of them . . . there were also upon every one two and thirty strong men, that fought upon them, besides the Indian that ruled him' (v. 37). Undaunted by this imposing array, Judas and his men gave battle.

In this affray we read of the heroic death of Eleazar (the brother of Judas), who single-handed attacked one of these beasts, which fell, crushing him to death. Judas was compelled to retreat to Jerusalem to withstand a siege. However, political difficulties arose in Syria, and on the advice of Lysias, his master made peace.

Chapter 7 tells of a further effort to overcome Judas Maccabeus under the leadership of the old enemy Nicanor 'a man that bare deadly hate unto Israel' (v. 26). Again Judas Maccabeus called upon the Lord ere he engaged the enemy, and again the enemy was routed; and Nicanor perished in the battle. 'Thus the land of Juda was in rest a little while' (v. 50).

'Now Judas had heard of the fame of the Romans' (chap. 8: 1) and of their widespread conquests, for 'they had conquered kingdoms both far and nigh' (v. 12). Judas, who throughout his career had trusted in the Lord, now committed the fatal error of entering into an alliance with a heathen power. He who had once stirred his followers with the words 'with the God of heaven it is all one, to deliver with a great multitude or a small company,' who had acknowledged that help cometh from the Lord, made a mutual compact with a heathen people for assistance in time of war.

To avenge the death of Nicanor, an army of 20,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry was sent to Judea, and Judas confronted them with 3,000 chosen men 'who seeing the multitude of the other army to be so great, were sore afraid; whereupon many conveyed themselves out of the host, insomuch as there abode of them no more but eight hundred men' (9: 6). They requested Judas to give up the fight, but Judas

refused. 'God forbid that I should do this thing, and flee away from them: if our time be come, let us die manfully for our brethren and let us not stain our honour' (v. 10). The battle ensued, but the odds were too great. Judas was slain and those of his little band who were left, fled. 'And all Israel made great lamentation for him, and mourned many days, saying, How is the valiant man fallen, that delivered Israel!' (v. 20-21). The glorious music of Handel's 'Judas Maccabeus' has made that illustrious name familiar to thousands who have never read the immortal story.

Leadership now passed into the hands of Jonathan (9: 31 to 12: 53). 'But when Baccides gat knowledge thereof, he sought for to slay him. Then Jonathan, and Simon his brother, and all that were with him, perceiving that, fled into the wilderness of Thecoe' (Tekoa). A period of guerilla warfare ensued in which Jonathan gained some victories, and eventually was in a position to suggest a cessation of hostilities, which Baccides accepted. 'When therefore he had restored unto him the prisoners that he had taken aforetime out of the land of Judea, he returned and went his way into his own land, neither came he any more into their borders. Thus the sword ceased from Israel (9: 72-73).

Political alliances were made with other former enemies, and Jonathan was ordained High Priest by King Alexander, son of Antiochus Eupator (10: 20). Thus arose the order of Asmonean Priest-Kings, the religious and civil heads of the State. By diplomatic alliances, Jonathan succeeded in maintaining his position for ten years, when he was treacherously murdered (12: 48).

The seed of Abraham played a more important

part in the building of the Greek Empire than is generally recognised. During Jonathan's term of office certain correspondence was exchanged with the Lacedemonians (Spartans), in which it was established that these people in Greece were kinsmen. 'It is found in writing, that the Lacedemonians and Jews are brethren, and that they are of the stock of Abraham (12: 21).

After the death of Jonathan, command devolved on Simon (B.C. 144) the last of the five brothers. Like Judas, he too appealed to the Romans, and partly by diplomacy and partly by war, consolidated his position and secured independence (13: 41). His son John proved himself 'a valiant man' and was promoted 'captain of all the hosts' (v. 53). After the death of Simon (135 B.C.) the leadership fell upon John's shoulders. Under the title Johannes Hyrcanus, he nobly supported the glory of his house. However, his deeds are not recorded in this Book, which concludes with the words, 'As concerning the rest of the acts of John, and his wars, and worthy deeds which he did, and the building of the walls which he made, and his doings, Behold, these are written in the chronicles of his priesthood, from the time he was made high priest after his father' (16: 23-24).

Concerning Judas Maccabeus and his brethren . . . and the manifest signs that came from heaven . . . so that being but a few, they overcame the whole country, and chased barbarous multitudes.

(2 *Maccabees* 2: 19-21).

This Book is an abridgement in one volume of five books written by Jason of Cyrene (2 *Maccabees* 2: 23). It is not a continuation of the First Book of the Maccabees. It begins earlier, but extends only to the death of Nicanor (cf. 1 *Maccabees* 7). However, there is much information supplementary to the First Book, particularly in the first seven chapters, just as the Books of the Prophets supplement the information given in the Books of Kings and Chronicles.

Chapters 1 and 2 are taken up with letters sent from the Jews in Palestine to their brethren in Egypt (Alexandria). The first of these letters includes the history of the 'sacred fire.' This sacred fire is referred to again in chapter 10: 3, where it is said to have been ignited by striking stones. Critics have labelled the story fabulous 'a popular legend designed to enhance the dignity of the restored Temple.' But there seems nothing far-fetched when one bears in mind the properties of petroleum. Let us, therefore, reproduce the story, leaving our readers to judge for themselves. Mark particularly the last verse.

'Therefore whereas we are now purposed to keep the purification of the Temple upon the five and twentieth day of the month Casleu, we thought it necessary to certify you thereof, that ye also might keep it, as the feast of the tabernacles, and of the

fire, which was given us, when Neemias (Nehemiah) offered sacrifice, after that he had builded the temple and the altar.' (No reference to this is to be found in the Canonical Book of *Nehemiah*). 'For when our fathers were led into Persia, the priests that were then devout took the fire of the altar privily, and hid it in an hollow place of a pit without water, where they kept it sure, so that the place was unknown to all men. Now after many years, when it pleased God, Neemias, being sent from the king of Persia (cf. *Nehemiah* 2 : 6) did send of the posterity of those priests that had hid it to the fire: but when they told us they found no fire, but thick water; Then commanded he them to draw it up, and to bring it; and when the sacrifices were laid on, Neemias commanded the priests to sprinkle the wood and the things laid thereupon with the water. When this was done, and the time came that the sun shone, which afore was hid in the cloud, there was a great fire kindled, so that every man marvelled. And the priests made a prayer whilst the sacrifice was consuming, I say, both the priests, and all the rest, Jonathan beginning, and the rest answering thereunto, as Neemias did. And the prayer was after this manner; O Lord, Lord God, Creator of all things, who art fearful and strong, and righteous, and merciful, and the only and gracious King, the only giver of all things, the only just, almighty, and everlasting, Thou that deliverest Israel from all trouble, and didst choose the fathers, and sanctify them: receive the sacrifice for thy whole people Israel, and preserve thine own portion, and sanctify it. Gather those together that are scattered from us, deliver them that serve among the heathen, look upon them that are des-

pised and abhorred, and let the heathen know that thou art our God. Punish them that oppress us, and with pride do us wrong. Plant thy people again in thy holy place, as Moses hath spoken (cf. *Deuteronomy* 30: 1-8). And the priests sung psalms of thanksgiving. Now when the sacrifice was consumed, Neemias commanded the water that was left to be poured on the great stones. When this was done, there was kindled a flame; but it was consumed by the light that shined from the altar. So when this matter was known, it was told the king of Persia, that in the place where the priests that were led away hid the fire, there appeared water, and that Neemias had purified the sacrifices therewith. Then the king, inclosing the place, made it holy, after he had tried the matter. And the king took many gifts, and bestowed thereof on those whom he would gratify. And Neemias called this thing Naphthar, which is as much as to say, a cleansing: but many men call it Nephi' (2 *Maccabees* 1: 18-36).

The letter from Palestine to Egypt is continued in chapter 2. Records were found showing that Jeremiah the Prophet knew of the sacred fire. These same records tell us of the hiding of other secret things. 'It was also contained in the same writing, that the prophet, being warned of God, commanded the tabernacle and the ark to go up with him, as he went forth into the mountain, where Moses climbed up, and saw the heritage of God. And when Jeremy came thither, he found an hollow cave, wherein he laid the tabernacle, and the ark, and the altar of incense, and so stopped the door. And some of those that followed him came to mark the way, but they could not find it. Which

when Jeremy perceived, he blamed them, saying, As for that place, it shall be unknown until the time that God gather his people again together, and receive them unto mercy' (cf. *Jeremiah* 23: 3-8; 32: 37-38). 'Then shall the Lord show them these things, and the glory of the Lord shall appear, and the cloud also (cf. *Luke* 21: 27) as it was showed under Moses (cf. *Exodus* 34: 5) and as when Solomon desired that the place might be honourably sanctified' (cf. 1 *Kings* 8: 10).

Verse 23 to end of the chapter are comments by the writer giving the source of his information which he abridged in the Book now known as Second Maccabees.

Chapter 3 relates the attempt of Heliodorus to plunder the Temple, and includes the first of several supernormal events. His attempt was frustrated by 'a great apparition' (v. 24). 'For there appeared unto them an horse with a terrible rider upon him . . . and smote at Heliodorus with his forefeet, and it seemed that he that sat upon the horse had complete harness of gold. Moreover two other young men appeared before him . . . who stood by him on either side.' This narrative may be the abridgment of Jason's first Book.

Chapter 4 deals with the intrigue of the high priests at Jerusalem, and amplifies the account of 1 Maccabees regarding the building of the Greek gymnasium.

Chapter 5 opens with a description of the second apparition. 'And then it happened, that through all the city, for the space almost of forty days, there were seen horsemen running in the air, in cloth of gold, and armed with lances, like a band of soldiers. And troups of horsemen in array, encountering

and running one against another, with shaking of shields, and casting of darts, and glittering of golden ornaments, and harness of all sorts.' It is interesting to note that Josephus speaks of 'a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon' of a somewhat similar character which occurred prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (*War of the Jews*, chap. 5, para. 3). This chapter of Maccabees gives us also the reason for the descent of Antiochus Epiphanes upon Jerusalem (cf. 1 *Maccabeus* 1 : 10), who later sent 'that detestable ringleader Apollonius' resulting in Judas Maccabeus withdrawing into the wilderness.

Chapter 6 again amplifies 1 Maccabees describing how the Temple was defiled and the people compelled to give up the laws of God. 'Whoso would not conform themselves to the manners of the Gentiles should be put to death.' It then proceeds with the dramatic story of the martyrdom of Eleazar, one of the principal scribes, who rather than obey the command to eat swine's flesh suffered torture and death. Certain of his acquaintances, taking him aside, besought him to bring flesh of our own provision, and make as if to comply with the king's command; but he scorned the suggestion. It should not be said of him that at the age of ninety he had gone over to a heathen religion. Courageously, a martyr to his faith, he went to the torture 'and thus this man died, leaving his death for an example of a noble courage, and a memorial of virtue, not only unto young men, but unto all his nation' (2 *Maccabees* 6: 31).

Others likewise refused to comply with the sacrilegious demands of the king, and chapter 7 describes the awful experiences of a mother and her

seven sons. It would be difficult to find greater examples of faith in any of our Christian martyrologies.

This seems to conclude the second of Jason's Books.

His third Book may possibly be covered by chapters 8 to 10: 9, which follow the fortunes of Judas Maccabeus and his adherents up to the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, who suffered a painful end. 'And thus he that a little afore thought he might command the waves of the sea (so proud was he beyond the condition of man) and weigh the mountains in a balance, was now cast on the ground and carried in a horselitter, shewing forth unto all the manifest power of God' (9: 8). When death's dark veil was drawing near, he had the audacity to send a letter 'to the good Jews, his citizens,' in which he requested them 'to remember the benefits that I have done unto you . . . and that every man will be still faithful to me and my son. . . . Thus the murderer and blasphemer having suffered most grievously, as he entreated other men, so died he a miserable death in a strange country . . .' (vv. 26-28). The history of the Maccabeans is continued, until 'the Lord guiding them' they recovered the Temple and the city 'upon the same day that the strangers profaned the temple, on the very same day it was cleansed again, even the five and twentieth day of the same month . . .' (10: 5—cf. 1 *Maccabees* 4).

Jason's fourth Book seems to be abridged in chapter 10: 10 to the end of the 13th chapter. This continues the history during the reign of Antiochus Eupator, up to the time they made peace. Chapter 10: 24 to the end speaks of further signs from

heaven. The occasion of this was the descent of a great force under Timotheus. Again the Maccabees 'turned themselves to pray unto God . . . and besought Him to be merciful to them and to be an enemy to their enemies, and an adversary to their adversaries, as the law declareth' (cf. *Exodus* 23: 22). 'But when the battle waxed strong, there appeared unto the enemies from heaven five comely men upon horses, with bridles of gold, and two of them led the Jews, and took Maccabeus betwixt them and covered him on every side with their weapons, and kept him safe. . . .'. The enemy was defeated, and a service was held by the Maccabees when they returned thanks to the Lord Who had done so great things for Israel and given them the victory.

Yet another sign is given in chapter 11 when Lysias lay siege to Bethsura 'not at all considering the power of God, but puffed up with his ten thousands of footmen and his thousands of horsemen and his fourscore elephants.' Again the Maccabees implored the Lord for help 'and as they were at Jerusalem, there appeared before them on horseback one in white clothing, shaking his armour of gold' (v. 8). Inspired by this vision they went forward to the fray 'having an helper from heaven.' Lysias and his army suffered a severe defeat, following which, convinced that these valiant men 'could not be overcome because the Almighty God helped them, he sent unto them and persuaded them to agree to all reasonable conditions and promised that he would persuade the king that he must needs be a friend unto them.'

The success of the Maccabees aroused the jealousy of surrounding peoples, who began to massacre the Jews who dwelt among them. In

chapter 12 we read of the outrage at Joppe, when two hundred men, women and children were drowned by a treacherous act. This outrage, and the fact that others elsewhere purposed to commit a like act, came to the ears of Judas Maccabeus, who, with his commandos, descended upon the places by night and set them on fire. The scenes must have been similar to sights witnessed by many of the present generation, for 'the light of the fire was seen at Jerusalem two hundred and forty furlongs off.'

If our attempt to identity Jason's five Books is correct, chapters 14 to 15: 37 give the abridgment of the last of these. It follows the fortunes of the Maccabees up to the death of Nicanor (cf. 1 *Maccabees* 7) where the story ends.

It will be perceived that the writings of this Book differ in quality from those of the 1 Maccabees. They call for a higher sense of spiritual perception. It seems fitting that such should be the case in the last of the Apocryphal Books, as it is with the last of the Canonical Books.

There are many references in the Holy Bible showing that the angelic host is actively occupied in the affairs of this world. Our dear Lord once said: 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven' (*Matthew* 18: 10). Since angels minister to children, surely we may believe a similar ministration may be granted to those of more mature age; and as to the individual so to the nation, remembering that Michael the Great Prince standeth for the children of Israel.

And if I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto (2 *Maccabees* 15: 38).

As we have seen, the Books of the Apocrypha (excepting 2nd *Esdras*) are found in the Greek Version of the Bible known as the Septuagint. The Septuagint was the Bible of our Lord's day. At that time Greek was the literary language of Palestine; Hebrew was not commonly known. The language of the common people was Aramaic. Most of the quotations from the Old Testament which appear in the New are taken from the Septuagint, not from the Hebrew. It follows, therefore, that in studying the Apocrypha we are studying Books which formed an integral part of the Scriptures used by the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, when, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they wrote the Gospels and Epistles which go to form the New Testament.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

B.C.	
745-727	Tiglath Pileser, who deported Israelites.*
727-722	Shalmaneser V, who deported Israelites.*
722-705	Sargon II, who deported Israelites.*
705-681	Sennacherib, who deported Judahites.*
604-561	Nebuchadnezzar, who deported Judahites.*
538-529	Cyrus, who overthrew neo-Babylon and issued his edict permitting the return to Jerusalem.*
515	Completion of Zerubbabel's Temple.
478	Esther married to Xerxes I.
465-424	Artaxerxes I, who issued the command to restore and to build Jerusalem.*
458	Exiles return under Ezra.
445-4	Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem and rebuilds the walls.
333-323	Alexander the Macedonian overthrows the Persian Empire and visits Jerusalem.
321	Onias I made high-priest.
320	Ptolemy I, Satrap of Egypt, takes Jerusalem and deports many Jews to Alexandria.
314	Antigonus of Syria takes Palestine from Egypt.
302	Ptolemy retakes Palestine.
301	The battle of Ipsus in which Antigonus is defeated and the empire of Alexander is divided into four kingdoms as foretold in Daniel viii, 22.
300	Simon the Just made high-priest.
292	Eleazar made high-priest.
285-247	Ptolemy II (Philadelphus), King of Egypt. During his reign the Septuagint was made.
277	Manasseh made high-priest.
250	Onias II made high-priest.

* The authority for these dates is the British Museum: A Guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities.

B.C.

217 Simon II made high-priest.
The Battle of Raphia in which Ptolemy defeats Antiochus, but being prevented from entering the Holy of Holies he persecutes the Jews in Alexandria.

205 Antiochus the Great takes Palestine ?198.

198 Onias III made high-priest.

175 Jason buys the high-priesthood from Antiochus.

172 Menelaus outbids Jason and becomes high-priest.

168 Antiochus Epiphanes takes Jerusalem, slays 40,000 people, desecrates the Temple.

167 The Maccabean revolt begins.

165 Judas Maccabeus retakes Jerusalem, purifies and re-dedicates the Temple.

163 Alcimus made high-priest. Menelaus slain.

161 Death of Judas Maccabeus, his brother Jonathan succeeds him.

153 Jonathan becomes high-priest as well as national leader, and so becomes the first of the Asmonean priest-princes.

143 Simon, the last of the Maccabean brothers, becomes high-priest.

135 Simon is murdered, and his second son, John Hyrcanus, succeeds him.

130 John Hyrcanus throws off the Syrian yoke and destroys the rival temple on Mount Gerizim.

107 Aristobulus succeeds his father, John Hyrcanus, and calls himself King of the Jews.

106 Alexander Janneus drives his brother Aristobulus from the throne.

79 Death of Janneus. His widow, Alexandra, becomes queen with the support of the Pharisees. Her son Hyrcanus is made high-priest.

B.C.

70 (69?) Death of Alexandra. (See note at the end.) Hyrcanus II succeeds her, but is driven off the throne by his younger brother Aristobulus.

65 Hyrcanus tries to recover the throne.

63 Pompey supports Hyrcanus and takes Jerusalem.

54 Crassus plunders the Temple.

47 Julius Cæsar appoints Antipater Proconsul of Judea. Antipater makes his son Herod Governor of Galilee, and another son, Phasael, Governor of Jerusalem.

40 The Parthians take Jerusalem and Phasael is slain. Herod flees to Rome, and is appointed King of Judea.

37 After a siege of six months, Herod takes Jerusalem, and as King of Judea reigns thirty-four years.

35 Herod makes Aristobulus III, brother of his wife Mariamne, high-priest, but afterwards causes his death.

29 Herod has his Asmonean wife, Mariamne, exĕcuted.

17 After two years of preparation Herod begins the building of the Temple.

4 Birth of Jesus Christ.
The death of Herod.

A.D.

30 The Crucifixion.

70 The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.

NOTE.—The above chronological table does not pretend to be absolutely accurate in all its details. Many difficulties are encountered in the field of chronology which cannot be discussed here. Authorities vary in their conclusions, though the differences are, in the main, slight. The above table is sufficiently accurate for a general survey. Whether, e.g., Alexandra died in 70 or 69 B.C. makes no material difference.